

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-11

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SUBJ: THE FUTURE OF THE IMET PROGRAM IN AFGHANISTAN

REF: KABUL 4649

1. SUMMARY. REEVALUATING OUR INTERNATIONAL MILITARY
EDUCATION AND TRAINING (IMET) PROGRAM IN AFGHANISTAN
IN THE WAKE OF THE LEFTIST REVOLUTION OF APRIL 27, WE
CONCLUDE THAT THE CONTINUATION OF AN ACCEPTABLE, LIMITED
PROGRAM IN FY 1979 WILL PROBABLY SERVE U.S. INTERESTS.
END OF SUMMARY.

2. SINCE COLONEL ABDUL QADER, MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENSE,
HAS EXPRESSED POSITIVE, ALTHOUGH LUKEWARM, INTEREST IN
CONTINUING THE CURRENT IMET PROGRAM HERE (REFTEL),
AN ATTITUDE REFLECTED BY HIS MINISTRY'S CURRENT IN-
CLINATION TO ALLOW TWO OF THE AFGHAN OFFICERS DESIGNATED
BY THE PRECEDING REGIME BEFORE THE COUP TO FILL
SOME PENDING IMET TRAINING SLOTS, WE BELIEVE IT

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WOULD SERVE OUR NATIONAL INTEREST TO OFFER THE
AFGHAN GOVT APPROX THE SAME SIZED PROGRAM NEXT YEAR
(I.E., APPROX \$500,000). IF THIS PROGRAM, ALBEIT SMALL,
CAN ASSIST THOSE AFGHAN LEADERS WHO MAY BE TRYING TO PRESERVE
SOME MODICUM OF NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE AND NONALIGNED STATUS
FOR THEIR COUNTRY (QADER HIMSELF MAY BE IN THIS CATEGORY),
IT WOULD BE WELL WORTH THE SMALL INVESTMENT INVOLVED. ADDITION-

ALLY, AS LONG AS THE NEW AFGHAN REGIME IS WILLING TO ALLOW SOME OF ITS MILITARY OFFICERS TO BE DIRECTLY EXPOSED TO WHAT OUR COUNTRY REPRESENTS AND WHAT OUR SYSTEM OF GOVT HAS TO OFFER, WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO UTILIZE THIS OPENING TO PROVIDE SOME BALANCE, HOWEVER SMALL, TO THE ENORMOUS SOVIET INFLUENCE IN THE MILITARY FIELD.

3. IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE NEW AFGHAN GOVT WOULD BE LIKELY TO MISUSE IMET TRAINING TO MOUNT AGGRESSIVE MILITARY OPERATIONS AGAINST ITS NEIGHBORS OR

FOR THE REPRESSION OF ITS OWN PEOPLE. JUDGING FROM THE TYPE OF TRAINING WE HAVE GIVEN AFGHAN OFFICERS IN THE PAST NAD INTEND TO OFFER IN THE FUTURE, THESE FORMS OF MISUSE ARE UNLIKELY. THESE CONSIDERATIONS ARE, HOWEVER, FACTORS WHICH WE WILL BE KEEPING UNDER CONSTANT REVIEW.

4. WE HAVE NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT WHAT THE FUTURE MAY HOLD. OFFICERS TRAINED UNDER THE IMET PROGRAM ARE UNLIKELY TO BE PERMITTED TO EXERCISE AS MUCH INFLUENCE IN THE MILITARY AS WAS THE CASE UNDER THE PREDECESSOR REGIMES. THE NEW AFGHAN GOVT MAY ALSO EVENTUALLY DECIDE TO TERMINATE THE PROGRAM OUTRIGHT -- OR ALLOW IT TO WITHER AWAY GRADUALLY. WE ALSO MIGHT DECIDE TO TERMINATE IT IF WE FIND IT IS NOT SERVING OUR INTERESTS. BUT, UNTIL ONE OF THOSE EVENTUALITIES OCCURS, WE SEE LITTLE TO BE LOST IN CONTINUING A POTENTIALLY USEFUL
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-- AND RELATIVELY INEXPENSIVE PROGRAM (ONE, INCIDENTALLY, WHICH HAS PROVIDED OPERATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR EFENSE ATTACHES HERE). FURTHERMORE, WE THINK WE OUGHT TO GO ON THE RECORD AS HAVING OFFERED THE AFGHANS EVERY POSSIBLE MEANS TO REMAIN TRULY NONALIGNED.

5. RECOMMENDATION: IT IS OUR RECOMMENDATION, THEREFORE, THAT THE IMET PROGRAM FOR AFGHANISTAN BE CONTINUED INTO FY 79 AT APPROXIMATELY THE SAME LEVEL AS THE FY 78 PROGRAM. THE FUNDS COULD, IN EFFECT, BE SET ASIDE FOR US, PENDING FURTHER CONSIDERATIONH F THE SITUATION HERE LATER THIS YEAR. SINCE THE CONGRESS WILL PRESUMABLY BE DEFERRING ACTION ON THE TOTAL IMET PROGRAM UNTIL AUTUMN, WE WOULD NOT SEE ANY NEED TO DISCUSS FY 79 TRAINING WITH THE AFGHAN GOVT UNTIL AFTER THAT EMBASSY ASSESSMENT FOLLOWING CONGRESSIONAL ACTION. IN THE MEANTIME, WE PLAN XO PROCEED WITH THE TRMAINING ELEMENTS OF THE FY 78 PROGRAM.
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